

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 168020  
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S E C R E T STATE 168020

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO INTSUM 361

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HEIGHTENED LEVEL OF TENSION DURING THE LATE THURSDAY-EARLY FRIDAY PERIOD AS A RESULT OF ISRAEL'S FEAR OF EGYPTIAN INTENTIONS POINTS UP THE EASE WITH WHICH THEIR INHERENT MUTUAL SUSPICIONS CAN BECOME A FULL-FLEDGED CRISIS. NEITHER SIDE BASICALLY TRUSTS THE OTHER, AND SERIOUS DIFFERENCES IN THEIR RESPECTIVE PERCEPTIONS MAY LEAD TO RAPID MAGNIFICATION OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS OR MIS-INTERPRETATIONS. ISRAEL'S URGENTLY EXPRESSED CONCERNS IN THIS MOST RECENT INSTANCE IS A CASE IN POINT. CALM FORTUNATELY PREVAILED, BUT PERHAPS IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO REVIEW SOME OF ITS ASPECTS.

2. AMBASSADOR EILTS OBSERVED VERY EARLY ON IN LAST WEEK'S EPISODE THAT THE WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE WAS HEAVILY AGAINST  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 168020

THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE EGYPTIANS WERE PLANNING AN ATTACK ON ISRAEL. AN EGYPTIAN ATTACK IN THE SINAI WOULD SEEM COMPLETELY OUT OF PHASE WITH SADAT'S CURRENT POLICY OBJECTIVES AS WE UNDERSTAND THEM.

3. SADAT, IN RECENT MONTHS, HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY PREOCCUPIED WITH EVENTS IN AFRICA, PARTICULARLY IN LIBYA,

CHAD, SUDAN AND THE HORN. THE EGYPTIAN CONCERN APPEARS CURRENTLY FOCUSED ON LIBYA AND LIBYAN ACTIVITY IN CHAD. WE CONTINUE TO HOLD OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT EGYPT MAY AT SOME POINT UNDERTAKE MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST LIBYA. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO HARD INFORMATION CONCERNING SUCH PLANS. WE HAVE POINTED BEFORE THAT WE MIGHT NOT NECESSARILY HAVE ADVANCE INDICATIONS OF AN ATTACK.

4. SHOULD EGYPT DECIDE TO MOVE AGAINST LIBYA, IT IS VIRTUALLY AXIOMATIC THAT EGYPTIAN FORCES IN THE CANAL AREA WOULD BE PLACED ON AN ALERT, POSSIBLY EVEN IN ADVANCE OF SUCH AN OPERATION. THE ISRAELIS THEMSELVES KNOW THIS. (WE HAD NO INDICATION THAT THE SECOND AND THIRD ARMIES WENT ON ALERT. MOREOVER, EGYPTIAN DIRECTOR OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SHAWKAT TOLD OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE THAT NO MANEUVERS WITH UNITS LARGER THAN A BRIGADE WERE PLANNED.)

5. THE EGYPTIANS ALSO ARE DESIROUS OF PROMOTING A GOOD ATMOSPHERE IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN ORDER TO ADVANCE THE PEACE PROCESS. SADAT, MOREOVER, HAS TAKEN STEPS WITHIN THE LAST WEEK WHICH UNDERSCORE HIS DETERMINATION TO AVOID BEING ACCUSED OF PLAYING THE SPOILER ROLE AS REGARDS RESUMED PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. IN THIS REGARD, FAHMY TOLD AMBASSADOR EILTS THAT EGYPT HAS BEEN TRYING TO  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 168020

CREATE A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE FOR THE BEGIN-CARTER MEETING. SADAT BELIEVES THE ARABS MUST CONTINUE TO PORTRAY THEMSELVES AS MODERATE. FAHMY ALSO POINTED OUT THAT SADAT'S IMPORTANT SPEECH SCHEDULED FOR JULY 16 WOULD ASSIST IN CREATING A GOOD ATMOSPHERE.

6. THE SIMPLE EXPLANATION FOR THE ISRAELI OVERREACTION, OF COURSE, MAY LIE IN THE EXTREME SENSITIVITY ABOUT MILITARY PREPAREDNESS OF MOSHE DAYAN, WHO WAS DEFENSE MINISTER AT THE TIME OF THE ARAB SURPRISE ATTACK IN 1973, AND OF OTHER KEY FIGURES IN THE NEW ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. FROM AN OBJECTIVE DISTANCE, EGYPTIAN FORCES DO NOT SEEM READY TO ATTACK ISRAEL SUCCESSFULLY IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

7. THERE MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN A MEASURE OF EGYPTIAN FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE ISRAELI CONCERNS IN THURSDAY NIGHT'S INCREASE IN TENSION. THE EGYPTIAN EXPLANATION GIVEN BY GENERAL SHAWKAT--THAT THE STORY OF THE MANEUVERS IN THE EAST WAS INTENDED TO COVER THE

DEPLOYMENT OF SOME UNITS TO THE LIBYAN BORDER ON JULY 16

AND JULY 17--IS EQUALLY SHORT-SIGHTED. THE EGYPTIANS APPEAR TO HAVE FAILED TO APPRECIATE THE IMPACT OF SUCH MANEUVERS ON THE ISRAELIS. THIS OVERSIGHT SEEMS ALL THE MORE GLARING AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF RECENT EGYPTIAN SUGGESTIONS THAT THE EGYPTIANS WERE AFRAID THAT THE ISRAELIS MIGHT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CAIRO'S PREOCCUPATION WITH AFRICA TO LAUNCH A PREEMPTIVE STRIKE.

8. WE ESTIMATE THAT PRESENT EGYPTIAN STRENGTH IN THE WESTERN MILITARY DISTRICT ADJACENT TO LIBYA IS 18-22,000 TROOPS. THIS REPRESENTS AN INCREASE OF SEVERAL THOUSAND SINCE BEFORE LAST APRIL, AT WHICH TIME AN ARMORED BRIGADE WAS MOVED INTO THE AREA--THE LAST SIGNIFICANT REINFORCEMENT. THE EGYPTIANS HAVE ALSO IMPROVED THEIR  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 168020

MILITARY SUPPORT FACILITIES AND LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS THERE SINCE APRIL. AT PRESENT, WE BELIEVE THAT THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY HAS THE CAPACITY FOR AT LEAST A LIMITED ACTION INTO LIBYA. THE DEPLOYMENT OF THREE MECHANIZED INFANTRY BATTALIONS TO THE WESTERN AREA, SHOULD IT OCCUR AS THE ISRAELIS HAVE SUGGESTED, WOULD ENHANCE THIS CAPABILITY, BOTH QUANTITATIVELY AND QUALITATIVELY.  
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